

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5048

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS VS

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION IN MR3

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM BIEN HOA 312 SENT ACTION SAIGON APRIL 15
BEING REPEATED TO YOU, QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 312

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS VS

SUBJ: MILITARY SITUATION IN MR3

1. THREE HUGE EXPLOSIONS AT BIEN HOA AIR BASE DURING THE
NIGHT OF APRIL 14/15, NOW BEING ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPERS OF INTERNAL
SABOTAGE, TOGETHER WITH THE FIRING OF NVA ARTILLERY ROUNDS INTO
THE AIR BASE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS, DOMINATED MILITARY
DEVELOPMENTS UP TO NOON OF APRIL 15. ELEMENTS OF THE 3RD ARMORED
BRIGADE BEGAN AN OPERATION ON ROUTE 1 DURING THE MORNING OF
APRIL 15 BUT MR3 HQ HAD NO REPORT ON PROGRESS AT THE TIME THIS
MESSAGE WAS BEING DRAFTED. NEW INTELLIGENCE SUGGESTS THE POSSIB-
ILITY OF THE PRESENCE OF ELEMENTS OF A NEW DIVISION, THE 325TH,
IN LONG KHANH PROVINCE. PRESSURE FROM THE 5TH NVA DIV CONTINUES
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IN LONG AN PROVINCE WHICH HAS BEEN REINFORCED WITH THE NEWLY

FORMED, STILL WEAK, 22ND ARVN DIV. ACTIVITY WAS LIGHT ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION.

2. AT ABOUT 1800 HOURS APRIL 14 A 20-ROUND ABF STRUCK THE NORTHWESTERN AREA OF BIEN HOA AIR BASE WITH IMPACTS ON AND NEAR THE WEST END OF THE NORTHERN RUNWAY. THESE WERE FIRST REPORTED AS 122MM ROCKET ROUNDS, LATER AS SEVEN ROUNDS OF 130MM ARTILLERY AND THE BALANCE 122 ROCKETS, AND LATEST WORD IS THAT ACCORDING TO JGS ANALYSIS, THE ARTILLERY ROUNDS WERE 122M GUN ARTILLERY FIRED AT MAXIMUM RANGE (22 KMS, FROM YT 156290). OTHER INFORMATION INDICATES THAT THERE WERE TWO TUBES. AN AERIAL OBSERVER REPORTED THAT COUNTER-BATTERY FIRE DIRECTED AT THE YT 156290 NVA FIRING POSITION CAUSED 15 MINUTES OF SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS. THE BRINGING OF BIEN HOA AIR BASE WITHIN NVA ARTILLERY RANGE WILL NOTABLY RAISE THE THREAT TO VNAF MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES AT THE BASE.

3. DURING THE NIGHT OF APRIL 14/15 HUGE EXPLOSIONS ON BIEN HOA AIR BASE AT 2345, 0200, AND 0210 HOURS ROCKED THE AREA AND EVEN SHOOK WINDOWS IN SAIGON. IT IS CLEAR THAT SEVERAL AMMUNITION STORAGE MOUNDS WERE DETONATED BUT, WITH THE AMMUNITION AREA STILL CLOSED BECAUSE OF FIRES AND OTHER HAZARDS AND THE DIFFICULTY OF OBTAINING RELIABLE INFORMATION, THERE ARE VARYING ACCOUNTS OF WHAT HAS BEEN LOST. THE DEPUTY MR3 COMMANDER TOLD US THAT SAPPERS OR INTERNAL SABOTEURS HAD CAUSED EXPLOSIONS IN TWO OR THREE MOUNDS CONTAINING SMALL ARMS FOR INTERNAL USE ON THE BASE AND POSSIBLY ALSO "AIRPLANE ROCKETS" WHICH WE THINK MAY HAVE BEEN HIS DESCRIPTION FOR CBU BOMBS, WHICH ARE CONFIRMED TO HAVE BEEN DETONATED. THE MR3 CHIEF OF STAFF SAID THE LOSSES CONSISTED MOSTLY OF OLD AERIAL BOMB ORDNANCE SET ASIDE FOR DESTRUCTION BECAUSE OF AGE, PLUS MINES AND OTHER AMMUNITION FOR DEFENSE OF THE BASE. OUR DAO RESIDENT OFFICER ON THE BASE HAS CONFIRMED FROM PERSONAL OBSERVATION THAT UP TO 3,000 FEET OF THE WEST END OF THE NORTHERN RUNWAY, TAXIWAYS IN THE AREA, AND THE WEST END OF THE AIRPORT IN GENERAL ARE LITERALLY COVERED WITH "FLASHETTES" FROM CBU BOMBS. HE HAS ALSO REPORTED EXTENSIVE BUILDING AND FACILITY DAMAGE (BUCKLED WALLS, BROKEN WINDOWS, ETC.) FROM THE HUGE DETONATIONS BUT THUS FAR WITHOUT MAJOR AFFECT ON MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS. 6500 FEET OF THE RUNWAY WERE USABLE AT 1300 HOURS AND WAS BEING USED FOR A-1 AND LIGHTER AIRCRAFT. THE WESTERN 3,000

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FEET OF THE RUNWAY, STILL LITTERED WITH ORDNANCE AND DEBRIS FROM THE EXPLOSIONS, WERE BEING CLEARED WITH INDICATIONS THAT THE RUNWAY WOULD BE FULLY USABLE BY SUNDOWN APRIL 15.

4. AT XUAN LOC PROVINCIAL TOWN, THERE HAS BEEN NO IMPORTANT NVA PRESSURE FOR MORE THAN 24 HOURS. THE 1ST AIRBORNE BRIGADE OPERATING SOUTHWEST OF THE TOWN HAD A HEAVY CONTACT AT 1800 HOURS APRIL 14 KILLING A REPORTED 74 NVA WITH ONLY LIGHT FRIENDLY

CASUALTIES. THE 43RD REGT IN OPERATIONS ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 15 MOVED ABOUT 5 KMS EAST OF THE TOWN BEFORE MAKING A CONTACT FROM WHICH THE GVN FORCES EMERGED WITH NO CASUALTIES AND FOUR NVA KILLED, PLUS SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF EQUIPMENT AND EIGHT TONS OF AMMUNITION CAPTURED. THERE IS SOME SPECULATION THAT THE NVA MAY HAVE PULLED BACK FROM XUAN LOC TO RE-FORM FOR ANOTHER OFFENSIVE, EITHER THERE OR ELSEWHERE.

5. THE 3RD ARMORED BRIGADE OPENED AN OPERATION ON ROUTE 1 EAST OF THE BIEN HOA/LONG KHANH BORDER ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 15, BUT AT 1300 HOURS NO REPORT ON PROGRESS HAD BEEN RECEIVED. THE 3RD ARMORED BRIGADE COMMANDER, BG KHOI, HAS A WELL-KNOWN REPUTATION FOR REPORTING SPARSELY WHILE HIS OPERATIONS ARE IN PROGRESS.

6. PRESSURE FROM THE 5TH NVA DIV CONTINUES IN LONG AN PROVINCE WHERE THE 12TH REGT, 7TH ARVN DIV (UNDER MR4) AND THE STRONG LONG AN TERRITORIAL FORCES HAVE JUST BEEN REINFORCED BY TWO REGTS OF THE NEWLY RE-FORMED AND STILL WEAK 22ND DIV. MOST OF THU THUA DISTRICT IN WESTERN LONG AN PROVINCE HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY TRANSFERRED FROM MR3 TO MR4 AO FOR CURRENT OPERATIONS.

7. THE MR3 CHIEF OF STAFF REPORTS THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTER, TOGETHER WITH THE MR3 COMMANDER, VISITED PHAN RANG ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 15 AND THAT THE SITUATION THERE, DESPITE INCREASING NVA PRESSURE, SEEMS FAIRLY STABLE FOR THE MOMENT. HE THOUGHT THAT THE SITUATION IN PHAN THIET IS UNDER CONTROL AFTER GVN REINFORCEMENTS WERE MOVED IN BUT HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN HEAVY ATTACKS IN THE PHAN THIET AREA DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS.

PETERS UNQUOTE
MARTIN

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